



fashion steps into

Helen Temple and Anne Edwards get together to give you the latest news and tips about wearing the newest wooden-soled shoes



WE'VE been hearing a good deal about wooden-soled shoes lately—and probably you've already seen some in the shops. So today I've invited Anne Edwards into my beauty parlour to tell you something of the history and experiment behind these new shoes, what they look like, and how much they cost.

WHAT DO THEY LOOK LIKE?

You'll see from the pictures on this page that the new wood-soled shoes are extremely smart. That rather stumpy, "cloggy" look has been fashionable in walking shoes for some time, and the new wood soles cash in on it.

Anne Edwards says the shoes are made in several smart styles. Each manufacturer designs his own style of uppers. Very often the thick sole (it's nearly an inch thick) is painted a bright colour and matches trimming like a piping or laces on the uppers, which are in calf or suede.

Each shoe manufacturer is trying out ideas of his own and experimenting to improve on what he has done so far.

At present the Board of Trade have approved a special pattern of rigid wooden sole which is 7/10 in. thick at the ball of the foot, tapering to 1/4 in. thick at the toes. The sole is curved and turns right up off the ground at the toe like a clog. Many manufacturers are using this sole and putting their own designs of uppers on it.

It is the best that has been evolved so far, but experiments are still going on, especially to find some way of making a flexible sole that bends with the toes when you walk.

Very hard light woods are being used, birch and beech, alder and pine, but

even these do not stand up to wear on London pavements, so the soles are reinforced on the parts that take hardest wear with strips of leather or composition. As soon as the reinforcement shows signs of wearing you must have it mended if you want the shoes to last.

By the way, you'll find prices compare favourably with leather shoes, and coupons are less—two instead of five for a pair.

HELEN TEMPLE SAYS

Now I'm going to tell you about wearing the new shoes.

The ones I tried out first were the approved pattern for a rigid sole.

When you wear them you have to learn a new "rolling" walk—you put your foot down flat and then roll all the way up on to the toe and take short, quick steps. Your foot doesn't bend in the middle at all, you don't even crease the uppers (which probably means you'll get longer wear out of them). It's quite a pleasant sensation this "roll," which is caused by the curve of the toe.

See that there is plenty of depth in the toe when you buy your pair. Don't sacrifice this important point of comfort for the sake of getting a smaller-looking toe. Some of these wood-soled shoes feel a little heavier than leather ones, and others are just as light.

The next pair I tried were hinged. These certainly feel more like an ordinary leather sole to walk in, because they bend where your foot naturally bends in walking, but they still give you a sensation of being lifted rather high off the ground. Manufacturers are not so sure of them as of the rigid sole, so you are taking a risk on their wearing qualities.

I do think you will be wise to break

yourself in to them gradually. Don't go for a long shopping expedition and stand in queues the first day you have them on. Try to choose a pair that feels light on your foot, otherwise your feet will get very tired.

FOOTNOTES

If your feet feel stiff after wearing the rigid soles, give them a little massage, bending the toes backwards and forwards, first with your hand and then with their own muscles so that they are kept flexible. You'd be wise to do a few minutes of this whenever you take off your shoes, and walk a few paces on tip-toe to strengthen the arches.

Then, because there is no resilience in wood as there is in leather, your feet may ache at first. Rub your feet with cream, especially working on the soles and instep before you get into bed at night. You may find an ankle sock helps to muffle the hardness of the wood.

Some people feel a strain in the tendons at the back of the leg when they wear a rigid sole for the first time. That's partly because they haven't learned the proper rolling walk. But you can massage these tendons between finger and thumb, rubbing in an embrocation at the same time.

Apart from these hints the usual shoe rules apply—don't get them too small—it's an even bigger temptation when the shoes are clumpy. Especially make sure there is enough depth for your toes.